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Curios and Relics

Tools

Maul

Owned by Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

May 9, 1895

Connecticut Courant

LINCOLN'S WOODEN MAUL.

IN HIS YOUNGER DAYS HE SPLIT
RAILS WITH IT.

Presented to the Connecticut Historical Society — A Much-Prized Relic of the Martyred President.

The Connecticut Historical Society gained Tuesday a relic of Abraham Lincoln, which for years to come will be viewed by generations of Americans, who have read of the fact that Lincoln, long before there was any indication that he would ever be a man of prominence in affairs, was a rail-splitter. It is the very maul that he swung when with John Hanks in about 1830, after his removal from Kentucky, he split rails for a living in the back woods of Illinois. The maul was presented by Jonathan F. Morris, who in a few simple words told how he obtained the relic of Lincoln's early days.

Some time after Lincoln made a visit to Hartford, previous to his nomination for the presidency, when a number of young men escorted him from the



old city hall, where he spoke, the late Colonel George T. Bissell called Mr. Morris into his office on Main street and showed him a section of a rail six feet long, which Lincoln had split. This set Mr. Morris to thinking that Lincoln must have had some tool to split it with. He accordingly wrote his friend, General Thomas S. Mather of Springfield, Ill., formerly of Simsbury and a near neighbor of Lincoln, asking if he could not get him a maul used by Lincoln, and in due course received from him the maul, a picture of which is given herewith. It is of ironwood or black oak, thirty-two inches long including the handle, made of one piece of wood, and shows how much it was used by the way it is indented when swung by Lincoln's powerful arms. Mr. Morris showed it to his friend Colonel Bissell, who admitted that he had beaten him, in getting the weapon with which Lincoln probably split the very

maul once used by Lincoln. The young men who escorted Lincoln on the night of his visit to Hartford formed a club known as the "Wide Awakes," which became the nucleus of the organization which under that name spread all over the land during that memorable presidential campaign. On the evening of Friday, July 27, 1860, there was a great rally at the Republican Camp on the corner of Asylum and High streets, where the Batterson building now stands. The Hartford Wide Awakes, 400 in number, with their president, the late George S. man, escorted the Newark (N. J.) battalion to the camp. There was a jollification and speeches were made by Lieutenant-Governor Catlin, Editor Conger of the "Newark Mercury," Senator Foster, Judge Spaulding of Ohio, George P. Bissell, George S. Gilman, Mr. Foster of the "Newark Mercury" and others. There were several presentations, and General Joseph R. Hawley, then editor of the "Evening Press," on behalf of Mr. Morris, presented the Wide Awakes with the maul. It was accepted by President Gilman with an appropriate speech as told in the "Evening Press" of the following day.

General Mather, who obtained the maul from Mr. Morris, was at the time adjutant-general of Illinois. He testified to the genuineness of the relic as follows:—

"I hereby certify that the maul now in possession of the Wide Awakes of the city of Hartford and state of Connecticut was procured by myself, from one John Hanks, a resident of the county of Macon and state of Illinois, a personal friend and co-laborer with Abraham Lincoln, by the request of J. F. Morris of Hartford, Conn., and that said maul was forwarded to said Morris, at his request. I further certify that before sending said maul to said Morris, I showed the same to Mr. Lincoln, then occupying the office of governor of the state of Illinois, at his headquarters of the campaign of 1860, and that said Abraham Lincoln told me that it was in his opinion genuine, and that what John Hanks had said about it was so, as he was a truthful man and knew all about it."

On December 7, 1864, Mr. Morris testified to the genuineness of the relics as follows:—

To whom it may concern—I hereby certify that this maul presented to the original Wide Awake Club of Hartford in 1860 was procured by me through General T. S. Mather, adjutant-general of the state of Illinois, from John Hanks of Sangamon county, with whom Abraham Lincoln worked at splitting rails. The certificate of John Hanks and others that this maul was used by Mr. Lincoln are among the papers of that sterling patriot and true man, General Joseph R. Hawley, now in the army at the front and cannot be obtained for the present occasion.

John Hanks died at Hickory Point, Ill., July 1, 1889. He was a cousin of Lincoln's mother. He was born in 1802 and it was he who, with his cousin, Nancy Hanks, induced Lincoln to move from Kentucky to Illinois. He helped to build Lincoln's cabin and was an expert rail-splitter and a close and intimate friend of President Lincoln. In 1831 Lincoln split with his own hands 2,000 rails for Major Warnick at Goose Neck Prairie, Coles county, Ill., and walked daily three miles to his work and return.

After the Republican Camp was torn down the maul came into the possession of the late Vincent Whiting, from whose widow Mr. Morris recently purchased it. In 1864 the maul was sent to Springfield, Mass., where there was a great soldiers' fair. It now has attached to it a sign, which was on it when it was exhibited there over thirty years ago. It reads, "This is the original maul used by Abraham Lincoln."

The Hon. Dwight Loomis, who was present at the meeting that evening, was also present at the great meeting in the Republican Camp in July, 1860, when the maul was presented to the Wide Awakes by General Hawley.

The maul can be seen at the rooms of the Connecticut Historical Society, where it will remain as one of the choicest relics in the society's fine collection.

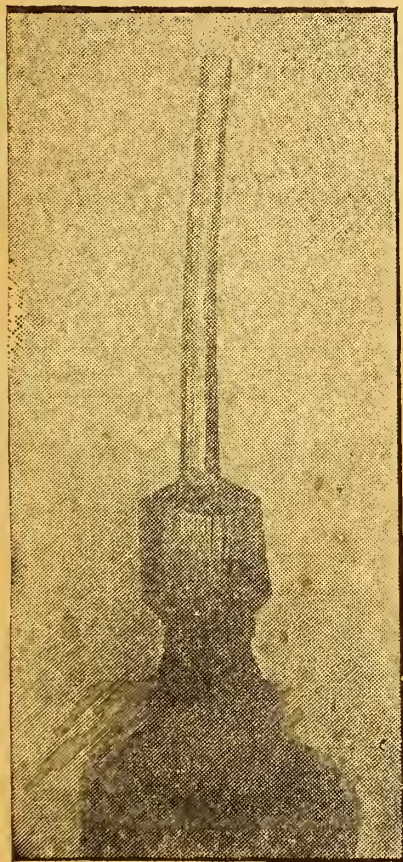
ABRAHAM LINCOLN WIELDED THIS MAUL.

HE SPLIT RAILS WITH IT IN
ILLINOIS.

J. F. MORRIS GAVE IT TO THE
WIDE AWAKES IN 1860.

Convincing Certificates as to Its Authenticity—Lincoln Himself Expressed Confidence that He Formally Used It.

Among the most interesting relics in the rooms of the Connecticut Historical Society in the Wadsworth Athenaeum, is a maul that Abraham Lincoln swung with his powerful arms when, in about 1830, with John Hanks, after his removal



Maul Used by Lincoln.

from Kentucky, Lincoln split rails for a living in the backwoods of Illinois. The maul was presented to the Historical Society at its monthly meeting May 7, 1895, by the late Jonathan F. Morris, who told how he obtained it.

After Lincoln made a visit to Hartford previous to his nomination for the presidency, when a number of young

men escorted him from the old City Hall, where he spoke, the late Colonel George P. Bissell called Mr. Morris into his office on Main street and showed him a section of a rail, six feet long, which Lincoln had split. Mr. Morris naturally thought that Lincoln must have had some tool to split it with. So he wrote his friend, General Thomas S. Mather of Springfield, Ill., formerly of Simsbury, a near neighbor of Lincoln's and asked him if he could get a maul used by him. In due course of time he received the maul, a picture of which is given herewith.

The maul is of ironwood or black oak, thirty-two inches long including the handle, and is made of one piece of wood, the handle section having apparently been hewed out from the original block of wood. It shows how much it was used when swung by Lincoln's arms, by the way it is indented and splintered. Mr. Morris showed Colonel Bissell the maul and the latter admitted that his friend had gone him one better in obtaining the weapon with which Lincoln, possibly, split the very rail that he possessed.

The young men who escorted Lincoln on the night of his visit to this city formed the organization known as the "Wide Awakes," which was the nucleus of the organization which under that name spread all over the land and was a potent influence in that important presidential campaign. On the evening of Friday, July 27, 1860, there was a great rally at the Republican Camp on the corner of Asylum and High streets, the site of the present Hotel Garde. The Hartford Wide Awakes, 400 strong, under the leadership of the late George S. Gilman, father of ex-Councilman George H. Gilman, escorted the Newark (N. J.) battalion to the camp. There were speeches by Lieutenant Governor Catlin, Editor Conger of the "Newark Mercury," Senator Foster, Judge Spaulding of Ohio, Colonel George P. Bissell, George S. Gilman and several others. There were several were several presentations and General Hawley, then editor of the "Evening Press," on behalf of Mr. Morris presented the maul to the Wide Awakes. President Gilman accepted the gift.

General Mather, who obtained the maul for Mr. Morris, was at the time adjutant general of the state of Illinois. He certified to the genuineness of the relic as follows:—

I hereby certify that the maul now in possession of the Wide Awakes of the city of Hartford and state of Connecticut, was procured by myself from one John Hanks, a resident of the county of Macon and the state of Illinois, a personal friend and co-laborer with Abraham Lincoln, by the request of J. E. Morris of Hartford, Conn., and that said maul was forwarded to said Morris at his request. I further certify that before sending said maul to said Morris I showed the same to Mr. Lincoln, then occupying the office of governor of Illinois, at his headquarters of the campaign of 1860, and that said Abraham Lincoln told me that in his opinion it was genuine and that what John Hanks said about it was so, as he was a truthful man and knew all about it.

On December 7, 1764, Mr. Morris certified to the genuineness of the relic as follows:—

To whom it may concern: I hereby certify that this maul, presented to the original Wide Awake Club in 1860, was procured by me through General T. S. Mather, adjutant general of the state of Illinois, from John Hanks of Sangamon county, with whom Abraham Lincoln worked at splitting rails. The certificate of John Hanks and others that this maul was used by Mr. Lincoln are among the papers of that sterling patriot and true man Joseph R. Hawley, now in the army at the front and cannot be obtained for the present occasion.

John Hanks, cousin of Abraham Lincoln's mother, died July 1, 1889, at Hickory Point, Ill. He was born in 1802 and went to Decatur, Ill., when 20

years old. It was he who induced Thomas Lincoln and his cousin, Lucy Hanks, Thomas Lincoln's wife and Abraham Lincoln's mother, to move to Illinois. He was a close and intimate friend of the President, and was widely known for his sayings. He helped to

build Lincoln's cabin and was an expert rail-splitter. In 1831 Lincoln split with his own hands 3,000 rails for Major Warnick at Goose Neck Prairie, Coles county, Ill., and walked daily three miles to his work, and return.

After the Republican Camp on Asylum street was torn down the maul came into possession of Vincent Whiting, from whose widow Mr. Morris bought it. In 1864 the maul was sent to Springfield, Mass., where there was a great soldiers' fair. It now has attached to it a sign, which was on it when it was exhibited there forty-three years ago. It reads: "This is the original maul used by Abraham Lincoln."

Other Relics in the Glass Case.

In the glass case on the north side of the hall, just east of the entrance, in which the maul rests, are several other interesting relics as follows: Mail bag about fifteen by eight inches, used in 1775 to carry the mail between Hartford, Middletown and New Haven; a sword carried by Captain Ichabod Wadsworth of Ellington, a Revolutionary officer; sword taken at the storming of Chapultepec, September 13, 1847, by Lieutenant Hodge of Hitchcockville; Governor Jonathan Trumbull's sword; pair of pistols carried during the Revolution by General Samuel McClellan of Woodstock, a great grandfather of General George B. McClellan; Commodore Brainbridge's sword when he commanded the old frigate Constitution; battle sword of Major General Israel Putnam; sword presented to Governor Seymour after he returned from the Mexican War; sword worn in the Pequot War, May, 1637, by Sergeant William Hayden of Windsor, with which he cut the bowstring of an Indian and saved the life of Captain John Mason; sword worn by Governor Jonathan Trumbull, jr., when he was secretary to General Washington; shoulder straps formerly worn by Lieutenant Frederick W. Jenkins, U. S. N., who perished in the United States battleship Maine, at Havana, Cuba, Feb. 15, 1898.

LINCOLN'S MAUL TREASURED.

Tool Used When He Split Rails Now
in a Museum at Hartford.

HARTFORD, Conn., February 22.—The maul which Abraham Lincoln used in the winter of 1830 or 1831, when he was splitting rails in the backwoods of Illinois, has come into the possession of the Wadsworth Athenæum, of this city. It was presented to the museum by Jonathan F. Morris, who tells how he secured it.

The maul came to Hartford because of the rivalry of two Hartford citizens. Shortly after the first visit of the Illinois rail splitter to this city, after he had received the first nomination for the presidency, the late Col. George P. Blissell called Mr. Morris into his office one day and showed him a section of rail six feet long which he said Lincoln had split.

Mr. Morris decided to hunt up a souvenir of the presidential candidate and accordingly wrote to his friend, Gen. Thomas S. Mather, of Springfield, Ill., asking him to get a maul used by Lincoln and ship it to Hartford. Some time afterward the maul arrived in this city, and Mr. Morris then had the satisfaction of inviting Colonel Blissell to inspect his souvenir.

Gen. Mather was at the time Adjutant-General of Illinois. That there might be no controversy over the authenticity of the homely tool Gen. Mather certified to its genuineness, and in his card of certification, which is still preserved here, he stated that he procured the tool himself from John Hanks, a relative of Lincoln, with whom the latter worked splitting rails in the winters referred to.

After Gen. Mather had secured the maul he showed it to Mr. Lincoln, who was a personal friend of his, and the latter said that as far as he was able to judge the tool was the identical one that he used, and he added that if John Hanks said it was the maul it was, for Hanks knew and he was a truthful man. During a Republican rally held in this city on Friday, July 27, 1860, Gen. Joseph R. Hawley, afterward United States Senator, in behalf of Mr. Morris, presented the relic to the Wide Awakes, the political organization first formed in this city to campaign for Lincoln. For years the old maul occupied a place of honor in the Republican camp here, and in 1864 it was sent to Springfield as an exhibit in a soldiers' fair there. It still has attached to it a sign which was on it when it was exhibited there forty-three years ago, which reads: "This is the original maul used by Abraham Lincoln."

When the Republican camp was torn down the maul came into possession of Vincent Whiting, of this city, from whose widow Mr. Morris, the original owner, bought it.

The maul is of ironwood or black oak, thirty-two inches long, including the handle, and is made of one piece of wood. The handle section was apparently hewed out from the original block of wood. It is dented and splintered, showing evidences of much use. In 1831 Lincoln is said to have split with his own hands 3,000 rails for Major Warnick at Goose Neck Prairie, Coles county, Illinois.

**ANCIENT MAUL
COMES TO LIGHT.**

UNCLE TOM HODGEN, the barber, brought to our office a maul, of the old time rail splitting variety, that belonged to his father, Jack Hodgen, and has been in the Hodgen family for

sixty-seven years. It weighs fifteen pounds and shows evidence of having seen actual service in the hands of a rail splitter. The maul is in one piece, and made from the body of a hickory tree, as was the custom in the days, a half century ago, when every farmer had a custom of clearing a patch of timber every winter. There were three objectives to be satisfied by this custom; first, to provide fire wood for the next winter; second, to provide rails necessary for repairing the fences on the farm, and third, to add a few more acres of tillable soil to the farm, a patch known as the New Ground.

Uncle Tom says this maul is similar to mauls used by Abraham Lincoln during his rail-splitting career, and he intends to add it to the collection of souvenirs at the Lincoln Farm. —(Taylor County Star, Campbellsville.

Lincoln Farm
Sept 1900

OLD MAUL

Lincoln Used To Split Rails With Still Preserved.

SPECIAL DISPATCH TO THE ENQUIRER.

COLUMBUS, IND., February 25.—Dr. Bozell, formerly an old resident and practicing physician of Cincinnati, but now a resident and practicing physician of Clifford, is the owner of an old maul, made from the knot of a beech tree which grew on Anderson's Creek, in Spencer County, this state, and with which Abraham Lincoln, who afterward became President of the United States, split the rails that fenced in the old Lincoln home near the present site of Lincoln City, but then a howling wilderness.

The maul was given to Isaac Bozell, Dr. Bozell's father, by Thomas Lincoln, father of Abe, after the family had moved to Illinois, where they lived as neighbors. The maul has had considerable hard usage, but is still in a state of perfect preservation, except wear and tear, and has the same handle still in it used by the immortal President. It has been used but very little since it went out of the possession of the Lincoln family, about 1820.



